

Federal Trade Commission

§ 444.1

which has a substantial likelihood of influencing a reasonable franchisee or a reasonable prospective franchisee in the making of a significant decision relating to a named franchise business or which has any significant financial impact on a franchisee or prospective franchisee.

(o) The term *personal meeting* means a face-to-face meeting between a franchisor or franchise broker (or any agent, representative, or employee thereof) and a prospective franchisee which is held for the purpose of discussing the sale or possible sale of a franchise.

§ 436.3 Severability.

If any provision of this part or its application to any person, act, or practice is held invalid, the remainder of the part or the application of its provisions to any person, act, or practice shall not be affected thereby.

NOTE 1: The Commission expresses no opinion as to the legality of any practice mentioned in this part. A provision for disclosure should not be construed as condonation or approval with respect to the matter required to be disclosed, nor as an indication of the Commission's intention not to enforce any applicable statute.

NOTE 2: By taking action in this area, the Federal Trade Commission does not intend to annul, alter, or affect, or exempt any person subject to the provisions of this part from complying with the laws or regulations of any State, municipality, or other local government with respect to franchising practices, except to the extent that those laws or regulations are inconsistent with any provision of this part, and then only to the extent of the inconsistency. For the purposes of this part, a law or regulation of any State, municipality, or other local government is not inconsistent with this part if the protection such law or regulation affords any prospective franchisee is equal to or greater than that provided by this part. Examples of provisions which provide protection equal to or greater than that provided by this part include laws or regulations which require more complete record keeping by the franchisor or the disclosure of more complete information to the franchisee.

NOTE 3: [As per § 436.1(a)(24) of this part]:

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Pursuant to 16 CFR 436.1 et seq., a Trade Regulation Rule of the Federal Trade Commission regarding Disclosure Requirements and Prohibitions Concerning Franchising

and Business Opportunity Ventures, the following information is set forth on [name of franchisor] for your examination:

1. Identifying information as to franchisor.
2. Business experience of franchisor's directors and executive officers.
3. Business experience of the franchisor.
4. Litigation history.
5. Bankruptcy history.
6. Description of franchise.
7. Initial funds required to be paid by a franchisee.
8. Recurring funds required to be paid by a franchisee.
9. Affiliated persons the franchisee is required or advised to do business with by the franchisor.
10. Obligations to purchase.
11. Revenues received by the franchisor in consideration of purchases by a franchisee.
12. Financing arrangements.
13. Restriction of sales.
14. Personal participation required of the franchisee in the operation of the franchise.
15. Termination, cancellation, and renewal of the franchise.
16. Statistical information concerning the number of franchises (and company-owned outlets).
17. Site selection.
18. Training programs.
19. Public figure involvement in the franchise.
20. Financial information concerning the franchisor.

PART 444—CREDIT PRACTICES

Sec.

- 444.1 Definitions.
- 444.2 Unfair credit practices.
- 444.3 Unfair or deceptive cosigner practices.
- 444.4 Late charges.
- 444.5 State exemptions.

AUTHORITY: Sec. 18(a), 88 Stat. 2193, as amended 93 Stat. 95 (15 U.S.C. 57a); 80 Stat. 383, as amended, 81 Stat. 54 (5 U.S.C. 552).

SOURCE: 49 FR 7789, Mar. 1, 1984, unless otherwise noted.

§ 444.1 Definitions.

(a) *Lender*. A person who engages in the business of lending money to consumers within the jurisdiction of the Federal Trade Commission.

(b) *Retail installment seller*. A person who sells goods or services to consumers on a deferred payment basis or pursuant to a lease-purchase arrangement within the jurisdiction of the Federal Trade Commission.

(c) *Person*. An individual, corporation, or other business organization.

(d) *Consumer*. A natural person who seeks or acquires goods, services, or money for personal, family, or household use.

(e) *Obligation*. An agreement between a consumer and a lender or retail installment seller.

(f) *Creditor*. A lender or a retail installment seller.

(g) *Debt*. Money that is due or alleged to be due from one to another.

(h) *Earnings*. Compensation paid or payable to an individual or for his or her account for personal services rendered or to be rendered by him or her, whether denominated as wages, salary, commission, bonus, or otherwise, including periodic payments pursuant to a pension, retirement, or disability program.

(i) *Household goods*. Clothing, furniture, appliances, one radio and one television, linens, china, crockery, kitchenware, and personal effects (including wedding rings) of the consumer and his or her dependents, provided that the following are not included within the scope of the term *household goods*:

(1) Works of art;

(2) Electronic entertainment equipment (except one television and one radio);

(3) Items acquired as antiques; and

(4) Jewelry (except wedding rings).

(j) *Antique*. Any item over one hundred years of age, including such items that have been repaired or renovated without changing their original form or character.

(k) *Cosigner*. A natural person who renders himself or herself liable for the obligation of another person without compensation. The term shall include any person whose signature is requested as a condition to granting credit to another person, or as a condition for forbearance on collection of another person's obligation that is in default. The term shall not include a spouse whose signature is required on a credit obligation to perfect a security interest pursuant to State law. A person who does not receive goods, services, or money in return for a credit obligation does not receive compensation within the meaning of this definition. A person is a cosigner within the meaning of this definition whether or not he

or she is designated as such on a credit obligation.

§ 444.2 Unfair credit practices.

(a) In connection with the extension of credit to consumers in or affecting commerce, as commerce is defined in the Federal Trade Commission Act, it is an unfair act or practice within the meaning of Section 5 of that Act for a lender or retail installment seller directly or indirectly to take or receive from a consumer an obligation that:

(1) Constitutes or contains a cognovit or confession of judgment (for purposes other than executory process in the State of Louisiana), warrant of attorney, or other waiver of the right to notice and the opportunity to be heard in the event of suit or process thereon.

(2) Constitutes or contains an executory waiver or a limitation of exemption from attachment, execution, or other process on real or personal property held, owned by, or due to the consumer, unless the waiver applies solely to property subject to a security interest executed in connection with the obligation.

(3) Constitutes or contains an assignment of wages or other earnings unless:

(i) The assignment by its terms is revocable at the will of the debtor, or

(ii) The assignment is a payroll deduction plan or preauthorized payment plan, commencing at the time of the transaction, in which the consumer authorizes a series of wage deductions as a method of making each payment, or

(iii) The assignment applies only to wages or other earnings already earned at the time of the assignment.

(4) Constitutes or contains a nonpossessory security interest in household goods other than a purchase money security interest.

§ 444.3 Unfair or deceptive cosigner practices.

(a) In connection with the extension of credit to consumers in or affecting commerce, as commerce is defined in the Federal Trade Commission Act, it is:

(1) A deceptive act or practice within the meaning of section 5 of that Act for a lender or retail installment seller, directly or indirectly, to misrepresent

the nature or extent of cosigner liability to any person.

(2) An unfair act or practice within the meaning of section 5 of that Act for a lender or retail installment seller, directly or indirectly, to obligate a cosigner unless the cosigner is informed prior to becoming obligated, which in the case of open end credit shall mean prior to the time that the agreement creating the cosigner's liability for future charges is executed, of the nature of his or her liability as cosigner.

(b) Any lender or retail installment seller who complies with the preventive requirements in paragraph (c) of this section does not violate paragraph (a) of this section.

(c) To prevent these unfair or deceptive acts or practices, a disclosure, consisting of a separate document that shall contain the following statement and no other, shall be given to the cosigner prior to becoming obligated, which in the case of open end credit shall mean prior to the time that the agreement creating the cosigner's liability for future charges is executed:

NOTICE TO COSIGNER

You are being asked to guarantee this debt. Think carefully before you do. If the borrower doesn't pay the debt, you will have to. Be sure you can afford to pay if you have to, and that you want to accept this responsibility.

You may have to pay up to the full amount of the debt if the borrower does not pay. You may also have to pay late fees or collection costs, which increase this amount.

The creditor can collect this debt from you without first trying to collect from the borrower. The creditor can use the same collection methods against you that can be used against the borrower, such as suing you, garnishing your wages, etc. If this debt is ever in default, that fact may become a part of your credit record.

This notice is not the contract that makes you liable for the debt.

§ 444.4 Late charges.

(a) In connection with collecting a debt arising out of an extension of credit to a consumer in or affecting commerce, as commerce is defined in the Federal Trade Commission Act, it is an unfair act or practice within the meaning of section 5 of that Act for a creditor, directly or indirectly, to levy or collect any delinquency charge on a

payment, which payment is otherwise a full payment for the applicable period and is paid on its due date or within an applicable grace period, when the only delinquency is attributable to late fee(s) or delinquency charge(s) assessed on earlier installment(s).

(b) For purposes of this section, *collecting a debt* means any activity other than the use of judicial process that is intended to bring about or does bring about repayment of all or part of a consumer debt.

§ 444.5 State exemptions.

(a) If, upon application to the Federal Trade Commission by an appropriate State agency, the Federal Trade Commission determines that:

(1) There is a State requirement or prohibition in effect that applies to any transaction to which a provision of this rule applies; and

(2) The State requirement or prohibition affords a level of protection to consumers that is substantially equivalent to, or greater than, the protection afforded by this rule;

Then that provision of the rule will not be in effect in that State to the extent specified by the Federal Trade Commission in its determination, for as long as the State administers and enforces the State requirement or prohibition effectively.

(b) [Reserved]

PART 453—FUNERAL INDUSTRY PRACTICES

Sec.

453.1 Definitions.

453.2 Price disclosures.

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453.4 Required purchase of funeral goods or funeral services.

453.5 Services provided without prior approval.

453.6 Retention of documents.

453.7 Comprehension of disclosures.

453.8 Declaration of intent.

453.9 State exemptions.

AUTHORITY: 15 U.S.C. 57a(a); 15 U.S.C. 46(g); 5 U.S.C. 552.

SOURCE: 59 FR 1611, Jan. 11, 1994, unless otherwise noted.